

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 5329

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NODIS

CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR LE US JR SA SY

SUBJ: ASAD'S MESSAGE VIA HUSSEIN ABOUT SOVIET PRESSURE ON SYRIA

REF: STATE 177831

1. I TRIED TO GET VP MUBARAK THIS MORNING, BUT NO ONE SEEMED QUITE SURE WHERE HE WAS. (I HAVE SINCE LEARNED THAT HE LEFT FOR ALEXANDRIA TO BE ON HAND TO MEET THE PRESIDENT AT JIYANACLIS LATER TODAY.) I, THEREFORE, MET WITH MINSTATE MUHAMMED RIAD AT 1230 LOCAL TO GIVE HIM YOUR ORAL MESSAGE TO SADAT AND FAHMY. AFTER READING THE MESSAGE CAREFULLY, RIAD TOLD ME THE PRESIDENT AND FAHMY ARE EXPECTED AT JIYANCLIS AT ABOUT 1800 LOCAL TODAY RATHER THAN TOMORROW AS INITIALLY SCHEDULED. HE WOULD SEE TO IT THAT YOUR MESSAGE IS AT JIYANACLIS WHEN THE PRESIDENT AND FAHMY ARRIVE. IN THE MEANTIME, HE WOULD SEND A MESSAGE TO THE PRESIDENTIAL AIRCRAFT ALERTING THE PRESIDENT AND FAHMY THAT THERE WILL BE A MESSAGE FROM YOU WHEN THEY ARRIVE.

2. ASKED IF GOE HAS HAD ANY SUGGESTIONS OF NEW SOVIET PRESSURE ON SYRIA, RIAD SAID THERE HAVE BEEN "RUMORS" THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE THREATENED TO SUSPEND ARMS AND
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SPARE PARTS SHIPMENTS TO SYRIA IF ASAD DOES NOT STOP

HIS COLLUSION WITH THE LEBANESE MARONITES TO CRUSH THE PLO. HOWEVER, THESE ARE NO MORE THAN "RUMORS" AND GOE HAS NO HARD INFORMATION TO CONFIRM THEM. PLO REPS IN CAIRO HAD QUERIED SOVIET AMBASSADOR POLYAKOV ABOUT THESE REPORTS, BUT POLYAKOV DISCLAIMED ANY INFORMATION.

3. CONTINUING, RIAD RECALLED LAST AL SESSION HAD AGREED THAT SYRIA AND THE PLO SHOULD SEEK TO RECONCILE THEIR DIFFERENCES. DESPITE THE ABUSE AND VILIFICATION WHICH GOE RECEIVED FROM BOTH SYRIA AND THE PLO, IT HAS SOUGHT TO FACILITATE SUCH A RAPPROACHEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO. AS A STEP TOWARD THIS OBJECTIVE, ARAFAT WAS TO GO TOMDAMASCUS. ARAFAT HAS NOT REFUSED TO GO OR TO SEND A DLEGATION UNTIL THE SYRIANS WITHDRAW FROM THEIR PRESENT PRINCIPAL MILITARY POSITIONS IN LEBANON. IS ARAFAT'S POSITION THE RESULT OF DIRECT SOVIET URGING OR BECAUSE HE KNOWS THAT THE SOVIETS ARE PRESSURING ASAD? GOE HAS NO HARD INFORMATION. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN REPORTS THAT THE SOVIETS YESTERDAY SENT A MESSAGE TO ARAFAT AND JUMBLATT, BUT THE PLO REPS IN CAIRO PROFESS NO KNOWLEDGE WHETHER THIS IS SO OR WHAT THE CONTENTS MIGHT BE.

4. I NOTED THAT THERE HAS BEEN TALK IN SOME ARAB CIRCLES OF INTENDED CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON. DID GOE HAVE ANY INFORMATION? RIAD SEEMED PUZZLED. HE THEN RECALLED THAT, AT THE SPECIAL AL SESSION BEFORE THE LAST ONE, ARAFAT HAD AT ONE POINT ASKED THE RHETORICAL QUESTION, "SHOULD I THEN BRING THE CUBANS INTO LEBANON?" HE HAD DONE THIS IN THE CONTEXT OF SYRIAN UNWILLINGNESS AT THE TIME TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO WITHDRAW. RIAD SAID NO ONE HAD TAKEN THIS PARTICULARLY SERIOUSLY, CERTAINLY NOT THE EGYPTIANS. RATHER, ARAFAT WAS SEEKING TO DRAW AN ANALOGY BETWEEN LEBANON AND ANGOLA. CLEARLY, RIAD NOTED, GOE WOULD OPPOSE ANY INTRUCTION OF CUBAN FORCES INTO LEBANON AND ARAFAT KNOWS THIS. ALL THE ARAB REPS PRESENT AT THAT MEETING HAD HEARD ARAFAT'S COMMENT, WHICH RIAD OPINED IS PROBABLY THE SOURCE OF SUCH STORIES OF POSSIBLE CUBAN INVOLVEMENT.

5. RIAD EXPRESSED SOME PUZZLEMENT WHY ARAFAT SHOULD PASS
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SUCH A MESSAGE TO HUSSEIN RATHER THAN THROUGH THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IN DAMASCUS. HE WONDERED IF HUSSEIN IS MORE GULLIBLE. I TOLD RIAD THAT ASAD HAS BEEN USING THIS CHANNEL FOR SOME TIME, BUT I COULD NOT REALLY EXPLAIN WHY. HE SEEMED TO PREFER IT TO A MORE DIRECT CHANNEL.

6. NOTING THAT WE WOULD WELCOME PRESIDENT SADAT'S AND FAHM'S REACTION AND COMMENTS, I TOLD RIAD I

TENTATIVELY PLANNED TO GO TO ALEXANDRIA TOMORROW, MONDAY, IN ORDER TO MEET WITH FAHMY, ASSUMING THAT THE LATTER, TOO, REMAINS IN ALEXANDRIA. RIAD THOUGHT THAT FAHMY WILL PROBABLY DO SO TO HELP THE PRESIDENT PREPARE HIS JULY 23 SPEECH, BUT WE ARRANGED THAT I WOULD CHECK WITH HIM AND AFAF FAHMY LATER IN THE DAY TO BE SURE. I ASKED THAT RIAD LET FAHMY KNOW THAT I WOULD LIKE TO MEET WITH HIM TOMORROW.

7. COMMENT: WE ARE WELL ADVISED TO HANDLE THIS MATTER CAREFULLY WITH SADAT AND FAHMY. WHILE THEY PROFESS TO ACCEPT OUR EXPLANATIONS THAT WE HAVE NOT ENCOURAGED SYRIAN MILITARY INVOLVEMENT, THEY THINK OUR POLICY IN LEBANON HAS BEEN SHORT -SIGHTED. IT WILL NOT TAKE MUCH TO RE-AROUSE THEIR SUSPICIONS, ESPECIALLY SINCE THEY BELIEVE WE ARE NOT AT ALL DISPLEASED WITH THE DRUBBING THE SYRIANS ARE GIVING THE PLO. SADAT'S VIEWS ON THE PLO ARE AMBIVALENT. SOMETIME S HE DESCRIBES THEM AS A GREAT NUISANCE WHICH SHOULD BE GOT RID OF; AT OTHER TIMES HE IS THEIR STOUT CHAMPION. IT DEPENDS ON HOW THE PLO IS BEHAVING AT ANY PARTICULAR TIME AND, STILL MORE, ON HOW SADAT BELIEVES HE CAN USE THEM AS A PAWN IN GOE'S INTER-ARAB JOUSTING FOR POSITION. MOREOVER, EGYPTIANS ARE GENUINELY WORRED THAT IF PLO IS CRUSHED IN LEBANON BY A SYRIAN/MARONITE COMBINATION, IT WILL UNLEASH A GLOBAL TERRORIST CAMPAIGN FROM WHICH EVEN ARAB STATES, INCLUDING EGYPT, WILL NOT BE SPARED. IF THE SOVIETS ARE PUSHING ASAD TO EASE HIS PRESSURE ON THE PLO, WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THEY AND SADAT HAVE A COMMON OBJECTIVE, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT. IT WILL DEPEND IN PART ON HOW FAR THE SOVIETS GO.

8. I PLAN TO LEAVE FOR ALEXANDRIA AT 0900 (LOCAL) (0700 GMT).

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IF THERE IS ANY NEW MESSAGE YOU WISH CONVEYED TO SADAT AND FAHMY, I SHOULD HAVE IT BY THAT TIME. I HOPE RETURN SAME DAY.

9. SUGGEST THIS MESSAGE BE REPEATED BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, JIDDA FOR INFO.

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